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## Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: May 11, 1955

SUBJECT: U. S. Policy on Berlin.

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PARTICIPANTS: Mr. C. Burke Elbrick, EUR  
 Mr. F. J. Leishman, British Embassy  
 Mr. Cecil B. Lyon, GER

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 Authorized by: M. D. Brewster  
 August 4, 1975 1722

In compliance with Paragraph 8.h., NSC 5404/1, "Seek to persuade the UK and France to adopt the U.S. policy on Berlin..." and in accordance with the Secretary's authorization to proceed as indicated on memorandum of April 22, 1955 from Mr. Merchant to the Secretary, "US Policy on Berlin", I invited Mr. Leishman from the British Embassy to call. I told him that we have been giving some thought to the situation which has arisen in Berlin as a result of the imposition of excessive tolls on the Autobahn.

I mentioned that while a meeting has now been arranged by the three Allied High Commissioners and the Soviet High Commissioner, Pushkin, to take place on May 20, we thought it advisable to look beyond this meeting in the event that the situation was not settled there. We feel that if we are not able to obtain some indication of the Soviet position in this meeting, the situation might deteriorate and we might in time find our Autobahn access to Berlin cut off. This in turn might lead to cutting off all rail and canal access and in due course we might find ourselves, although it seems a remote possibility in view of the over-all situation, again in a blockade. I explained that we believe that the reimposition by the USSR of a blockade or severe harassment measures to Berlin at this time would be a deliberate challenge to the Western Powers' position in Berlin, and that the prestige of all three of us was very definitely involved. I continued that if the Soviets continue their harassing measures to restrict access to Berlin we felt it important to demonstrate our firm intention to maintain our position in Berlin. Eventually we might even find it necessary, in agreement with the British and the French, to use limited military force to the extent necessary to determine the Soviets' intention and to demonstrate our refusal voluntarily to relinquish our right of access to Berlin. Therefore, we thought we should consider what we should do under such possible extreme circumstances. For this reason we considered it would be useful to have the views of the British and the French Governments, and I was requesting Mr. Leishman to put this matter up to his Government. Later, if

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Later, if the views of the British and the French Governments coincide with ours, i.e., that we must show a determined attitude in Berlin, it would probably be advisable for the three Ambassadors, as well as the Allied Military Commanders in Western Germany and the three Commandants in Berlin, to work out some common plan of action.

Mr. Leishman said he quite understood our position and he also thought it was advisable that we should do some advance thinking lest we find ourselves scratching our heads when a definite difficult situation had arisen.

He asked (a) whether we considered consulting with the Germans and (b) whether we had any specific plans of action.

In regard to (a) I stated that while the three Ambassadors had, of course, been in constant consultation with West German and Berlin officials about the question of Autobahn tolls we did not think we should go into the particular question of the possible use of military measures until we had clarified our own thinking with the British and French.

In answer to (b) I said that when we mentioned the possible use of military force that was a very broad field indeed and we didn't have particular suggestions at the moment but that this was a matter which perhaps would best be decided by the Military. It was made clear, however, to Mr. Leishman that in our opinion our first action probably would be, along military lines, to have some sort of probing action to see how far the Soviets intended to go in this question.

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